

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-20 are currently pending. Claims 1, 6, 10 and 17 have been currently amended. Support for the amendments may be found throughout the specification. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration and allowance of the present application based on the following remarks and amendments are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 6, 10 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In view of the amendments to the claims, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are no longer indefinite. Thus, Applicants request reconsideration of these rejections.

Claims 1-3, 5, 10-14 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Farooq et al., WO/24825 (hereinafter "Farooq"). The Examiner asserts that Farooq teaches the claimed invention, *i.e.*, a process comprising a) mixing particles with a curable composition; and b) curing the curable composition, prior to the particles substantially swelling, to form a thermoformable sheet. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Notwithstanding the above, Applicants argue that Farooq does not teach curing a curable composition prior to the particles substantially swelling. Rather, Farooq explicitly states "[w]hen exposed to the monomer rich matrix, these particles will typically swell to about five times their volume in the dry state. Consequently, the particles may swell to a size of up to 3 mm when mixed with the matrix material." (page 9, lines 8-11). Thus, the particles disclosed by Farooq substantially swell prior to curing.

On the contrary, the claimed invention is directed toward curing a curable composition prior to the particles substantially swelling, as discussed in the instant specification. (See paragraph [0032] of the published patent application.) In view of the above arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that Farooq does not anticipate the claimed invention. Thus, Applicants request reconsideration of the these rejections.

Claims 4, 6-9, 15 and 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Farooq. Applicant asserts that the same argument above applies here as well. Furthermore, regarding the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), Farooq does not provide motivation to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the disclosure of Farooq in order to make the claimed invention. In fact, Farooq teaches away from

the claimed invention by disclosing that the particles may swell five times their volume in the dry state prior to any curing of the composition. In view of the above arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that Farooq neither anticipates nor teaches the claimed invention. Thus, Applicants request reconsideration of the these rejections.


Therefore, all rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Should any issues remain unresolved, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney for Applicants at the telephone number indicated below in order to expeditiously resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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